

HIKE NELSON COUNTY

On all trails – Use caution during hunting season. Sunday – Saturday

Appalachian Trail

45 miles of the [Appalachian Trail](#) lie in Nelson County with moderately challenging to rugged terrain. It is accessible from Route 56 in Tyro and at trail crossings along the Blue Ridge Parkway: Reeds Gap/Route 664, and Rockfish Gap/Afton Mountain (exit 99 off Interstate 64).

Appalachian Trail from State Route 56 (Swinging Bridge) to Harpers Creek

A 2.6-mile hike along the Appalachian Trail to Harpers Creek, where the water gurgles through the large rocks. Directions from SR 56 at Crabtree Falls: Take SR 56 east for approximately 3-4 miles. The Appalachian Trail crosses SR 56 and a parking lot is available to the left of SR 56.

Appalachian Trail to Spy Rock

An approximate 2 mile moderately strenuous hike from the [Montebello Fish Hatchery](#) up to the [Appalachian Trail and to Spy Rock](#), probably the best viewpoint in the central Blue Ridge. The rock outcrop, at 3,980 feet elevation, provides a 360 degree panoramic view of numerous mountain summits. Directions from State Route 56 at Crabtree Falls: Take 56 west towards Montebello. Turn left onto 690 to Montebello Fish Hatchery. A small parking lot for hikers is available beyond the hatchery buildings to the right (follow the sign). Follow the trail for approximately .9 miles until it intersects the Appalachian Trail (white blazed). Turn left (north) on the AT and follow it about .7 miles to the small side trail to Spy Rock. A rock scramble will lead to the top of Spy Rock.

Blue Ridge Parkway

Humpback Rocks encompasses 800 acres along the Blue Ridge Parkway between MP 5 and 9.3. This area is perhaps the best representation of the varied combination of natural and cultural resources anywhere along the Parkway corridor. The prominent rock outcrop was a landmark guiding wagon trains over the Howardsville Turnpike in the 1840s. A portion of the historic trace still exists. Stop by the Visitor Center and mountain farm exhibit at MP 5.8. The farm includes a single-room log cabin and a series of outbuildings that represent elements of regional architecture of the late 19th century. Costume interpreters provide demonstrations of weaving, basket making and gardening. A picnic area and comfort station are nearby at MP 8.4. ([download the map](#))

Milepost 18.5 White Rock Falls at Slacks Overlook

A 2.5-mile moderate hike, the highlight is the impressive gorge, which has a water fall and a natural wading pool. The name White Rock came from the abundant quartz rock found in the area. From Crabtree Falls in Nelson County, Route 56 west to the Blue Ridge Parkway to the Slacks Overlook (north of milepost 20). Park at the Slacks Overlook and the trail starts about 60 yards ahead on the east side of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Crabtree Falls

[Crabtree Falls](#) is the highest vertical-drop cascading waterfall east of the Mississippi River. Crabtree Falls features a series of five major cascades and a number of smaller ones that fall a total distance of 1,200 feet. The first overlook is just 700 feet from the new lower parking lot. The more adventurous hiker may continue to other overlooks, to the top at Crabtree Meadows, where the trail ends, or to the Appalachian Trail, just one half mile beyond Crabtree Meadows. From US Route 29, take Route 56 West at Colleen, follow Route 56 West for approximately 20 miles to 11581 Crabtree Falls Highway, Montebello VA. From the Blue Ridge Parkway (milepost 27) , take Route 56 East for 6.3 miles to Crabtree Falls

Fortune's Cove Nature Preserve

[The Preserve](#) contains a 5.3 mile hiking trail within the mountainous property. Other features are 7 viewpoints and a stream. The preserve is situated within some 29,000 acres of relatively intact forest habitat and hosts rare plant communities on a series of rocky glades. The 5.5-mile loop trail climbs steeply from the parking area, gaining some 1,500 feet in elevation before reaching its highest point. From Route 29 north at Lovingston, take Route 718 (Mountain Cove Road) to Route 651 (Fortune's Cove Lane). A parking area and informational kiosk at the base of the cove will help orient visitors. From Route 29, Route 718 to Route 651. [Click here for a trail map](#)

Henry Lanum Memorial Trail and the Mt. Pleasant Spur

A 4.8 mile circuit hike through the Mt. Pleasant National Scenic Area that encompasses two 4,000 foot mountains: Mt. Pleasant and Pompey Mountain. Take a short spur trail (.3 miles) to see the spectacular views from Mt. Pleasant. Directions from SR 56 at Crabtree Falls: Take SR west to the Blue Ridge Parkway. Follow the BRPW south to US Rt 60. Take RT 60 east to SR 634 (Davis Mill Creek Road). Continue on SR 634 to intersection with SR 755 (Wiggins Springs Road). Follow SR 755 to the end of state maintenance and continue on forest Development Road 48. Moderate + hike – last mile is Moderate ++

Humpback Rocks Trail – MP 5.8 Blue Ridge Pkwy.

The trail begins in the Humpback Gap parking lot on the Blue Ridge Parkway and ascends very quickly to the rocky ledges above. Enjoy some truly amazing 360 degree views on top of high slanted rock outcroppings. The view from Humpback Rocks is worthwhile any time of the year, a well-deserved reward after this short but steep hike. The trip down is much easier than the trip up, and only takes about 20 minutes to get back to the car. Nearby attractions: Humpback Rocks Visitor Center with Historic Mountain Farm buildings to the north, and Humpback Rocks Picnic Grounds to the south on the Blue Ridge Pkwy.

James River State Park and Wildlife Management Area

James River State Park features over 15 miles of hiking / biking / horseback riding trails that meander through 1500 acres of rolling meadows and quiet forests. Three miles of river frontage offer spectacular views, boat launches, picnic areas, primitive camping, electric/water camping for various equipment, cabins, and picnic shelters. A full service canoe livery is open seasonally. See spectacular views along the James River of Norwood in Nelson County, across the river from the park. To reach the James River Park, take US Route 60 east from Amherst to Gladstone. At the James River Bridge, turn left onto SR 605, travel seven miles, and turn left onto Route 606. 751 Park Road, Gladstone 434-525-7522

Kids in Parks TRACK Trail at the Rockfish River Trailhead

The Rockfish Valley [Kids in Parks Track Trail](#) in Nellysford at the [Rockfish Valley Foundation](#)'s beautiful Rockfish River Trailhead on Route 151, 1.5 miles south of Nellysford. The Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation's Kids in Parks Track Trail program has created a

network of self guided outdoor opportunities for kids and families to get unplugged, active and connected with nature. The Rockfish Valley TRACK Trail is a flat, 1 mile loop that follows the South Fork of the Rockfish River and Reids Creek. The trail features riparian, field and bog habitats and offers excellent opportunities for wildlife viewing. The trail was made possible with grant support provided by the [Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation](#) and the [Virginia Museum of Natural History](#). Rockfish Valley Highway, Nellysford, Virginia, 22958. For more information visit www.rockfishvalley.org , www.kidsinparks.com , email info@rockfishvalley.org or call 434-226-0446.

Kids in Parks TRACK Trail at the Virginia Blue Ridge Railway Trail

This [Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation](#) program helps get kids and families “un-plugged”, outdoors and actively engaged in nature, for their health and the health of our parks. Each TRACK Trail provides a series of self-guided, brochure led adventures designed to turn an ordinary hike into a fun-filled adventure. Kids who register their TRACK Trail adventures on the Kids in Parks website www.kidsinparks.com become members of the program’s Trail TRACKer Team and earn prizes designed to make their next adventure more fun. The [Kids in Parks TRACK Trail](#) is a kid friendly adventure along 1.8 miles of the generally level Virginia Blue Ridge Railway Trail. Walk along the rushing mountain waters of the Piney River and observe wildlife in their natural habitat. The trail is available for hiking, bicycling, and horseback riding from dawn to dusk. Free. 3124 Patrick Henry Highway, Piney River, Virginia, 22964. 434-263-7130 or 434-263-7015. Download the [Trail Map](#).

Mau-Har Trail – Blue Ridge Parkway Milepost 13.7

The blue blazed Mau-Har trail provides an excellent circuit hike in conjunction with the Appalachian Trail through the Three Ridges Wilderness area in Nelson County. The trail begins on the AT 1.8 miles from Reeds Gap/route 664. It continues for 3.3 miles through steep terrain passing near the 50 foot Campbell’s Creek waterfall. The trail ends on the AT, 1.5 miles from the junction of the AT and Route 56.

Montebello Nature Trail

A short trail (.5) follows a small stream that was once part of the Montebello Fish Hatchery. The path is lined with a wide diversity of ferns as well as native shrubs and wildflowers. Relax on one of the benches and listen for the Louisiana water thrush or watch dragonflies skimming the stream. Entrance just above the dam. The trail is always open. Follow Route 56 to Montebello. 359 Fish Hatchery Lane, Montebello

Montreal Park

Located on Route 56 east (James River Road) from Lovingston beside the VDOT office and across from the Collection Site at Shipman. The Park has a pavilion, picnic tables, and restrooms. It is great for parties, reunions, etc. To reserve, please call NCPRD 434-263-7130.

Nelson County Wayside

7 miles north of Lovingston on Route 29. The short hiking trail has views of the Rockfish River and includes a Hurricane Camille memorial marker.

Rockfish Valley Loop Trails

Experience the Rockfish River and Reid’s Creek on approximately 4 miles of trails on a farm surrounding the confluence. Part of the [VA Birding and Wildlife Trail](#), these paths offer recreation and interaction with nature and history. Currently open for hiking only, these are mowed grass and dirt trails, and have a nearly flat grade throughout, although surrounded

by spectacular mountain views. Parking is located at Spruce Creek Park at old Wintergreen, and on the southwest side of the Route 151 bridge over the Rockfish River. Open sunrise to sunset.

Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch

Seasonal hawk watching in the parking area at The Inn at Afton on top of the Blue Ridge Mountains. 185 Afton Circle, Afton 540-942-5201

Rockfish Ruritan Park

74 Rockfish School Lane, Afton 434-361-9349

Lower Rockfish Valley Watchable Wildlife Loop

Route 617 (Rockfish River Road) to the Rockfish Depot

Nelson County Wilderness Area

The Wilderness designation provides permanent protection for the two areas in their natural state. The Priest (nearly 6,000 acres) rises from an elevation of about 1,000 feet at the Tye River to 4,063 feet. Three Ridges (4,608 acres) is one of the wildest and most rugged areas in the Virginia Blue Ridge. One of the accesses to the area is the Appalachian Trail that runs through this scenic wilderness.

North Fork of the Piney River

A scenic driving and short walking trail offers views of Piney River as it cascading over large rocks. It is stocked for fishing and good swimming holes. Take Route 56 west to Massies Mill, turn on SR 666 (Dickie Road). Follow SR 666 for a total of approximately 4 miles passed Dickie Brothers Orchard where the road becomes a gravel road then winds up and over the mountain offering mountain views of the Blue Ridge. At the foot of the mountain turn right on to Route 827. Route 827 goes into the George Washington National Forest and parallels the North Fork of the Piney River. Parking along the roadside and walk beside the river (except where private property is posted) that offers scenic views of this mountain stream.

The river offers pleasing views of cascading rapids. It is stocked for fishing and there are some good swimming holes. Directions from Crabtree Falls on State Route 56: head East on Route 56 to the village of Massies Mill, then turn right to go West on Route 666. Stay on Route 666 for a total of approximately 4 miles through Dickie Brothers Orchard. Just past the packing shed, the road becomes a gravel road then winds up and over the mountain offering great views along the way. At the bottom of the other side of the mountain, turn right on to Route 827. Route 827 goes into the George Washington National Forest and parallels the North Fork of the Piney River. You may pull over to the side anywhere there is enough space (except where private property is posted) and walk beside the river.

Royal Oaks Watchable Wildlife Loop

Blue Ridge Parkway (Milepost 16) at Love, VA The trail is atop the Blue Ridge Mountains at Royal Oaks Cabins in LOVE, VA. and loops through the National Forest, Wilderness Areas, and the Parkway. 45 Royal Oaks Lane, Love 800-410-0627

Spruce Creek Park

The park is located at the trailhead of the Rockfish Valley Loop Trails and at the Rockfish Valley Foundation Natural History Center at the intersection of Route 151 (Rockfish Valley Highway) and 617 at Nellysford 434-361-2251

Tye River Park

Crabtree Falls Highway (Route 56) just east of Dickie Road, at Massies Mill. A small park located beside the Tye River with picnic tables and a short walk to the river bank.

Virginia Blue Ridge Rail Trail

3124 Patrick Henry Highway, Piney River, Virginia, 22964 The trail is 7 miles and is opened for hiking, biking and horseback riding year round. The main trailhead is in Piney River on SR 151, Patrick Henry Hwy. It has ample parking for cars and horse trailers. A smaller trailhead (at milepost 1.7) in Roses Mill on SR 674, Roses Mill Rd can accommodate only cars. Restroom facilities (portajohns) are available at both trailheads. The mainly crushed stone trail follows a scenic route along the Piney and Tye Rivers, where wildflowers bloom from spring through summer and wildlife abounds. The trail dead ends at the 7 mile point, there is no eastern access at Tye River Depot, you must retrace your steps to your vehicle. During the autumn hunting season, trail users should wear blaze orange clothing. The trail is open sunrise to sunset. The trail occupies the rail bed of the former Virginia Blue Ridge Railway, which ran from Tye River Depot (to interchange with the Southern Railway) to Massies Mill. Construction of the railroad started in 1915 and the line was abandoned in 1980.

To access the Piney River trailhead from the Lovingson area, take US 29 to State Route 56 west at Colleen; turn right onto SR 56, and travel 5 miles to turn left onto SR 151. After 2 miles you'll see the trailhead sign on left (3124 Patrick Henry Highway, Piney River). Parking for cars and horse trailers is available.

To access the Roses Mill trailhead from the Lovingson area, , take US 29 to SR 56 west at Colleen; turn right onto SR 56 and go about 4 miles to left turn onto Roses Mill Road/SR 674). The trailhead is about 1.4 miles farther (around milepost 1.7 of the trail).

USE CAUTION during hunting (Firearms) season Sunday – Saturday. Blaze orange recommended

[Click here for a trail map](#)

The Nature Foundation at Wintergreen

The [The Nature Foundation at Wintergreen](#) has marked and maintains 25 miles of scenic trails in the mountains. Information and trail maps are available through the nature foundation's office at the Trillium House at Wintergreen. 3421 Wintergreen Drive, Roseland, VA 434-325-8169

White Rock Falls

(Milepost 19) Blue Ridge Parkway -The 2 1/5 mile moderate hike highlights an impressive gorge, which has a waterfall and a natural wading pool. On the climb back up to the Parkway, you will be treated to glimpses of the Blue Ridge Mountains to the Northeast. The trail can easily be combined with other trails to make for a longer hike. To create a 5 mile loop, combine it with the Slacks Overlook Trail. Park at the Slacks Overlook and the trail starts about 60 yards ahead on the right side of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Delfosse Trail

Enjoy 5.5 miles of beautiful, rolling trail designed for hiking, mountain biking, and organized ATV rides. The trail winds through a mountainside of massive rocks and new and old growth

forest with interesting flora and fauna. Views of the winery and surrounding mountains.
Located at DeFosse Winery in Faber (off Route 29 North) Open during winery hours.